

for the President to get his budget plan over to us. Not next week or next month, but now. And this time, it should be serious—it should root out waste and inefficiency instead of kicking the can further down the road.

The budget blueprint he sent us last year was so roundly ridiculed for its fiscal gimmickry and its massive tax hikes that, when it came to a vote in the Senate, his own party joined Republicans in voting it down 99 to 0.

In the House, it was rejected unanimously. Even the President's most liberal allies couldn't defend it.

So we are counting on the President to get serious this time. And we are counting on Senate Democrats to stop relying on Republicans to bail them out of their irresponsibility and habitual legislative tardiness.

But the broader point is this: President Obama and his Senate Democratic allies will have plenty of time to campaign next year. The American people are exhausted after all these years of campaigning, and they expect Democratic leaders now to finally work with the divided Congress they elected to get things done. As I have said before, the President has to figure out how to govern with the situation he has, not the one he wishes he had. That is what being President is all about.

It is time to return to actually solving problems—in other words, to legislate the way we are supposed to around here: with transparency, with public input, and with sufficient time to develop sound policy. That is especially true when it comes to dealing with the most controversial issues in Washington. Whether it is the budget or tax reform or health care, we end up with better outcomes when we legislate in the light of day and not in some back room.

For instance, the Senate majority should be allowing us to mark up bills so that Members with expertise in a certain issue area can contribute to the legislative process in the most constructive and transparent way possible.

When bills do reach the floor, the Senate majority should allow Members of both parties the chance to represent the voices of their constituents by offering amendments in an open process.

And when the House sends us bills, the Senate majority should actually take some of them up every once in a while.

The leadership won't agree with everything the House passes; but that is okay. If the Senate passes a different version of a bill, we can work out our differences through the legislative process.

That is how Congress is supposed to function, even though it's not at all how the Senate has functioned recently.

I know Washington Democrats' most important priority right now is getting Nancy Pelosi her old job back in 2014. But that is not what Americans want—and that is why Washington has become so dysfunctional.

The American people, including my constituents in Kentucky, expect them to get off the hustings and work with Members of both parties to address the most serious challenges facing our country. The public is tired of the manufactured crises, the poll-tested gimmicks, and the endless campaigning. They expect and deserve better than that.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business until 11:45 a.m., with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each, with the time equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees, with the majority controlling the first 30 minutes and the Republicans controlling the second 30 minutes.

Mr. McCONNELL. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask consent to speak in morning business.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senate is in morning business.

The Senator is recognized.

STOP ILLEGAL TRAFFICKING OF FIREARMS ACT

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, yesterday the Senate took an important step forward when it comes to keeping guns out of the hands of criminals. Senator PAT LEAHY, chairman of the Judiciary Committee, introduced bipartisan legislation to finally crack down on the straw purchasing and illegal trafficking of firearms. I was happy to join in introducing this bill. It is a bipartisan group of Senators, including Senator KIRSTEN GILLIBRAND, Senator SUSAN COLLINS, and my colleague from Illinois, Senator MARK KIRK. Chairman LEAHY's legislation combined a straw purchasing bill he and I introduced earlier this year together with a gun trafficking bill on which Senators Gillibrand and Kirk had been working. We sat down with Senator COLLINS and crafted a new bill, the Stop Illegal Trafficking of Firearms Act. It is important legislation, and the need for it is very clear.

I have met a number of times in recent months with law enforcement leaders in Chicago and across my State. I asked them what Congress can do to help better protect our communities and our children, and one thing I kept hearing over and over again was that we needed to crack down on straw purchases. Time after time, law enforcement agencies say, criminals and gang members commit crimes with guns they purchased through others.

A typical straw purchase happens when someone who legally can purchase a weapon and pass a background check buys a gun on behalf of someone who cannot pass that same background check. When a straw purchaser buys from a licensed gun dealer, the purchaser falsely claims on the Federal sale form that he is the actual buyer of the gun. Under current law, it is illegal to lie and buy a gun this way, but the only charge a Federal prosecutor can bring is for knowingly making a false statement on a Federal form—an offense which dramatically understates the gravity of the situation.

We have had several hearings in the Senate Judiciary Committee, including one I chaired on February 12, where U.S. attorneys have testified that these paperwork prosecutions are wholly inadequate as a deterrent for straw purchasing. Some of the critics even on my Senate Judiciary Subcommittee panel said: Why don't you prosecute more? The U.S. attorneys told us it's because these paperwork offenses are not taken that seriously by the court. The new law we have written will be taken seriously.

The cases, as they stand now, are hard to prove and have little jury appeal. Even a conviction usually results in a very small sentence under the current law. The reality is that straw purchasers think they can make a fast \$50 or more by buying a gun from somebody else, and that the consequences are not that great. We need to change this equation.

At the hearing I chaired in the Judiciary Committee's Constitution Subcommittee on February 12, we heard powerful testimony from Sandra Wortham from the South Side of Chicago. Her brother, a Chicago police officer, Tom Wortham IV, was murdered in 2010 by gang members with a handgun that had been straw purchased and trafficked to Chicago from Mississippi. Almost 1 out of 10 crime guns in Chicago come from Mississippi. We ask why. Because the standards for sales are lax in Mississippi, and straw purchasers know they can fill the trunk of a car with these purchased weapons and head to the Windy City and sell them on the streets to thugs and drug gangs. Then, of course, they result in tragedy.

The gang members who killed Officer Wortham were not allowed to buy a handgun from a dealer because of their age and criminal records, but it was real easy to get a straw purchased gun on the street. According to an investigative report by the Chicago Tribune,